

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
December 12 - 18, 2013

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1. Kerry Announces More U.S. Aid to Storm-damaged Philippines (12-18-2013)

By Cheryl Pellerin
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18, 2013 – Secretary of State John F. Kerry visited Tacloban in the Philippines yesterday and announced that the United States will provide an additional \$24.6 million in humanitarian aid to help on-going recovery efforts from last month's devastating typhoon, adding to the \$62 million already given.

The new aid, provided through the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, is intended to help ensure that residents and relief workers have immediate access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene services, Kerry said, and to make sure they get food and temporary shelter essential to continuing their critical work.

“On behalf of President [Barack] Obama and the American people, it's my privilege to come here today to offer our condolences to the families of the more than 6,000 who perished in the storm, and to wish a very full and speedy recovery to the some 27,000 who were injured,” the secretary said.

“We are keeping in our thoughts and prayers the nearly 1,800 people who still remain missing,” Kerry added. “The United States is committed to doing whatever we can as we go forward to try to help our friends in the Philippines recover.”

A super typhoon made landfall six times in 16 hours Nov. 8, bringing strong winds and heavy rains that caused flooding, landslides and widespread damage across the central Philippines. In Leyte province alone, according to USAID, storm surges reached 13 feet and sustained winds surpassed 175 mph.

“Last month’s typhoon broke the world’s heart, but what is certain is it didn’t break the spirit of the people here,” Kerry said.

“The resilience, the courage, the determination to rebuild and to remake what was, inspires all of us. The truth is that what’s been happening here since the moment this storm passed is inspiring to everybody,” he added.

In the immediate wake of the typhoon, one of the most pressing tasks was to coordinate the opening of Tacloban airport, the secretary explained, and the logistical challenge was overwhelming. But Capt. Roy Trinidad – a SEAL in the Philippine navy -- and U.S. Army Maj. Leo Liebreich and U.S. Air Force Maj. George Apalisok got right to work, he said.

The men worked and slept side by side for 10 days straight to oversee the enormous challenge of off-loading and distributing relief supplies. They spent their nights beneath a makeshift shelter made of a tarp and some buckets and boards, the secretary said.

“Their efforts saved hundreds of lives and inspired thousands more people to do the same,” Kerry said. “And it demonstrated the enduring partnership between two allies — not only in good times, but in trying times as well.”

Kerry also applauded the team effort. “USAID, the U.S. military, and the departments of Defense and State, I can tell you unabashedly and with great pride, have done incredible work here together,” he said. “And all of that has been done in very close partnership with the Philippine government.”

Private corporations, nongovernmental organizations, faith-based groups and the diaspora communities have shown willingness of leadership and generosity to come together and deal with the catastrophe, Kerry said, and they all deserve an enormous amount of credit for working under the most difficult circumstances,” the secretary said.

USAID has just signed a memorandum of understanding with Procter and Gamble and Coca-Cola, Kerry added, and they’ve created a public-private partnership that will help more than 2,000 small convenience stores in the Philippines repair, restock and rehabilitate their shops.

And the Citi Foundation announced that it has raised \$1 million for the recovery effort and that it is contributing another \$500,000 to help the Philippines rebuild, he added.

“These are just some of the examples of the good citizens of both our countries who are working together and around the world,” the secretary added, “helping step up to this challenge.”

Kerry said the United States will watch and work closely with the government to make further determinations as plans are laid out and as the future is defined by the Philippine government.

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[U.S. Officials Cautiously Optimistic About Aid Progress in Philippines](#)

2. Hagel, Russian Defense Minister Hold First Video Teleconference (12-17-2013)

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 17, 2013 – Fulfilling an agreement they made in August on the margins of a meeting between their countries’ senior diplomatic and defense officials, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu conducted their inaugural video teleconference yesterday to maintain an open dialogue and defense cooperation, Assistant Pentagon Press Secretary Carl Woog reported.

In a statement summarizing the meeting, Woog said Hagel and Shoigu discussed a number of issues, including missile defense, Syria, cybersecurity and countering improvised explosive devices.

Hagel noted that a joint plan of action for a diplomatic resolution of Iran’s nuclear program does not eliminate the need for U.S. and European allies to continue implementing missile defense plans in Europe, Woog said. The European Union facilitated the plan of action, agreed upon by the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and China in Geneva last month.

“Secretary Hagel stressed that U.S. and NATO missile defense efforts pose no threat to Russia and urged that both sides continue consultations on future missile plans in Europe,” Woog added.

Hagel and Shoigu also discussed recent planning efforts to remove chemical weapons from Syria under the auspices of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the assistant press secretary said. Hagel provided Shoigu with an update on U.S. planning to neutralize the chemical weapons once removed from Syria, he added.

“Secretary Hagel encouraged Russia to stay engaged with the process and continue providing critical assistance to ensure that chemical weapons are removed on schedule,” Woog said.

The defense leaders agreed to continue holding video teleconferences regularly, he said, and as needed if critical issues arise.

Biographies:

[Chuck Hagel](#)

3. Ambassador DiCarlo at U.N. Security Council Debate on Afghanistan (12-17-2013)

Remarks by Rosemary DiCarlo, U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, At a Security Council Debate on Afghanistan, December 17, 2013

Thank you Mr. President and for your expression of condolences for U.S. citizens in Afghanistan.

I'd like to welcome Special Representative Kubis back to the Council and thank him for his briefing. On behalf of my government, I also extend our appreciation to UNAMA's staff and the entire UN Country Team for their efforts, which have been crucial contributions as Afghans have made significant advances for their country. Also welcome Ambassador Tanin, thank him once again for his comments, his valuable comments and valuable engagement.

Mr. President, we can see evidence of the transformational changes in Afghanistan in the United Nation's 2013 Human Development Index. Since 2000, Afghanistan's score in the index has improved by nearly 60 percent, more than any other country. Without losing sight of the remarkable transformation Afghanistan has made in the last twelve years, today I'd like to speak to ongoing security, political and economic transition.

On the security side, with the help from the U.S. military and our many allies, the Afghan National Security Forces have assumed lead responsibility for security countrywide. This milestone also signaled a shift in the International Security Assistance Force's primary mission from combat to training, advising, and assisting the ANSF.

In this connection, the outcome of recent deliberations by the Loya Jirga on the U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Security Agreement shows that the Afghan people overwhelmingly support the partnership that has brought us this far — and want very much to sustain it. Concluding the BSA promptly would be an important signal to Afghans that their interests will be protected and that their concerns about the future will be addressed. The United States is committed, in the spirit of the BSA, to remain a strong partner in the support of the Afghan's people's effort to achieve lasting peace, security, and development.

Turning to the political transition, my government is encouraged by the progress Afghans have made in preparing for the April 2014 elections. Two key electoral laws have been enacted. Election and complaints commissioners have been appointed. A list of candidates has been finalized. And each of the presidential tickets represents a broad-based coalition, which is critical to ensuring that all groups have a stake in both the process and its outcome.

Like the United Nations and other countries that have been supporting Afghanistan's development, the United States strongly supports this democratic process, but I emphasize that we neither endorse nor favor any individual party or candidate. The choice of president and provincial officials rests — as it should — entirely with the Afghan people. The United States will continue to assist the Afghan government and especially its electoral authorities, as well as the parliament and civil society, in their efforts to strengthen the electoral system and prevent fraud. It is our profound hope that the April presidential balloting will prove to be a truly unifying moment for the Afghan people — an event that will both consolidate recent gains and provide a sturdy platform in the future for improved governance.

Economically, the United States and our international partners have, in the past decade, made a substantial contribution to Afghanistan's progress. For example, we have built or rehabilitated more than 3,000 kilometers of road; laid fiber optic cables that connect Afghans to one another and other countries; and made it easier for Afghans to obtain access to basic health and educational services.

Looking ahead, we strongly support a vision for regional cooperation called the New Silk Road. Secretary Kerry announced our backing just last week for the CASA-1000 transmission line project, which will allow existing hydroelectric generation capacity in Central Asia to be used in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We appreciate the efforts of the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank to advance CASA-1000, and hope other donors will join us in supporting this promising initiative. More generally, we are convinced that expanding connections to its Central Asian neighbors will greatly enhance Afghanistan's ability to diversify its economy, increase trade, and create more and better opportunities for its people. Accordingly, we fully endorse Afghanistan's goal of acceding to the World Trade Organization in 2014.

Mr. President, the progress Afghanistan has made has been built, in part, on the contributions of development professionals and humanitarian personnel, helping the local population on projects of every description. Their effort can entail severe risks. Already this year, there have been more than 230 incidents of violence directed at such personnel, imperiling both Afghans and the international staff and volunteers who work in partnership with them. Just three weeks ago, separate attacks in Uruzgan and Faryab provinces claimed the lives of nine aid workers. My government extends its sincere condolences to families of the victims of all such attacks. We call upon all parties in Afghanistan to respect the neutrality and basic human rights of humanitarian and development workers.

Finally, with an eye to continuity, my government hopes that this Council will approve in March 2014 a one-year renewal of UNAMA. This mission continues to play a vital role in Afghanistan and we see no need to alter the time frame or scope of its core mandate at this time. We must also ensure that UNAMA has adequate resources to carry out its many important priorities, which include the coordination of humanitarian and other assistance; support for regional diplomacy, the political process, human rights monitoring, institution building, and capacity development.

In closing, Mr. President, I'd like to cite the words of a leader whose legacy has been much on our minds. "In the history of nations," observed Nelson Mandela, "generations have made their mark through their acumen in appreciating critical turning points and, with determination and creativity, seizing the moment." Today, the leaders of Afghanistan, and their people, and the international community, all have choices to make. My government hopes that we will choose to seize the moment now so that, in 2014, we may continue working in partnership — lasting partnership — on behalf of a safer, more prosperous and more united Afghanistan.

Thank you.

4. Hagel Continues Consultations with Israeli Defense Minister (12-16-2013)

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16, 2013 – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel called Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon today to continue their close consultations on shared regional security challenges and the strong defense cooperation between the United States and Israel, Assistant Pentagon Press Secretary Carl Woog said.

In a statement summarizing the call, Woog said the two defense leaders discussed Hagel's recent trip to the Gulf region and his Dec. 7 remarks at Manama Dialogue in Bahrain.

“Secretary Hagel underscored the United States' commitment to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon,” Woog said. “They also discussed the situation in Syria, including the international community's efforts to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons program.”

Hagel and Yaalon pledged to continue to stay in close touch on these and other priority regional issues, and reaffirmed the unprecedented strength of the U.S.-Israel defense relationship, Woog said.

Today's phone call followed the fourth meeting between Hagel and Yaalon this year, he added, which took place at the Halifax International Security Forum last month in Canada.

Biographies:

[Chuck Hagel](#)

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[Hagel Discusses Regional Security Issues With Israeli Counterpart](#)

5. Kerry Interview with ABC News on Global Issues (12-15-2013)

Interview: John Kerry, Secretary of State, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam with Martha Raddatz of ABC's This Week

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I want to get right to reports out of North Korea that the young leader, Kim Jong-un, has executed his uncle, his mentor, one of the most powerful people in North Korea. What does this tell you about the danger coming from North Korea?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, it tells us a lot about, first of all, how ruthless and reckless he is. And it also tells us a lot about how insecure he is, to a certain degree. It tells us a significant amount about the instability internally of the regime, with the numbers of executions. This is not the first execution. There have been a significant number of executions taking place over the last months, which we're aware of. And most importantly, it underscores the importance for all of us of finding a way forward with North Korea in order to denuclearize the peninsula. It's an ominous sign of the instability and of the danger that does exist.

QUESTION: Well, what does it tell you about him? We know so little about him.

SECRETARY KERRY: We don't know. I mean, North Korea remains relatively opaque. It is not easy, but we do have insights. And the insights that we have tell us that he is spontaneous, erratic, still worried about his place in the power structure, and maneuvering to eliminate any potential kind of adversary or competitor and does so, obviously, ruthlessly. I mean, you saw the pictures of his uncle being arrested in front of everybody at this meeting.

QUESTION: And this was so public.

SECRETARY KERRY: I mean, it really reminded me of a video that we saw of Saddam Hussein doing the same thing, having people plucked out of an audience, with people sitting there sweating,

and nobody daring to move or do anything. This is the nature of this ruthless, horrendous dictatorship and of his insecurities.

And I think we need to factor that into the urgency of getting China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, all of us to stay on the same page and to put as much effort into the denuclearization as possible. To have a nuclear weapon potentially in the hands of somebody like Kim Jong-un just becomes even more unacceptable.

QUESTION: I want to move to the other headline, which is out of Iran, and Robert Levinson, the FBI agent who was reportedly working with the CIA in Iran, disappeared seven year ago. His family has confirmed to ABC News that he did have ties to the CIA. I know you're not going to confirm anything like that, but I want to tell you what his family said. They say that the U.S. Government has abandoned and betrayed him and is getting lip service from the Obama Administration on their efforts for his release. Has there been any real progress?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, there hasn't been progress in the sense that we don't have him back. But to suggest that we've abandoned him or anybody has abandoned him is simply incorrect and not helpful. The fact is that I have personally raised the issue, not only at the highest level that I have been involved with, but also through other intermediaries. So we don't have any meeting with anybody who has something to do with Iran or an approach to Iran where we don't talk to them about how might be able to find to find not just Levinson, but we have two other Americans that we're deeply concerned about.

QUESTION: Do you have any --

SECRETARY KERRY: And we're looking for proof of life. We're working on several processes that I'm not free to talk about, but there are a number of different channels that are being worked, and they're being worked aggressively.

QUESTION: Do you believe the Iranian Government is responsible for his disappearance?

SECRETARY KERRY: I think the Iranian Government -- I can't tell you what happened or how the sequence was, but I think the Iranian Government has the ability to help us here, and we hope they will.

QUESTION: The major news out of Syria this week: the U.S. has suspended nonlethal aid because Islamist rebels took over a warehouse.

SECRETARY KERRY: Yeah.

QUESTION: How did that happen?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, it happened because there's a certain amount of infighting taking place within the opposition. And this is the nature of the beast that has been unleashed by Bashar al-Assad, who probably is feeding some of it himself because he likes to try to play the part that he is the better alternative to these extremists. So there are some indicators that he's even fueling some of that.

The problem is you have some radical Islamic elements there.

QUESTION: So what's the next move?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, there isn't more – the moderate opposition has been united up until recently, and we believe they still can be united. We are aiming towards the Geneva II conference, which will take place in January – in the latter part of January. We are committed to try to bring people together, a strong representation of the opposition, together with the Assad regime representatives and with maybe 30 or so other countries and all try to work in the same direction, which is to get a political settlement out of Syria.

QUESTION: When can you start the nonlethal aid back again to those moderate...

SECRETARY KERRY: I think very quickly.

QUESTION: What are you waiting for?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, we've already had, we've already had some proffers to have the warehouse protected and other kinds of things. But I think people want to be careful, have the meetings that we need to have, and make certain we can proceed forward thoughtfully. Nobody wants to just fill the warehouse up again and have it taken over again. That doesn't make sense. So we need to make sure where we're going.

But look, this is complicated. This isn't easy. A year ago, before the President started to focus on this and figuratively had to accelerate the efforts to get a political solution, nothing was happening except fighting and killing. And a year ago, chemical weapons were being used and under the control of the Assad regime. Now, through our diplomatic efforts, we are moving towards a peace conference, difficult as it is --

QUESTION: And you really think that's going to happen next month?

SECRETARY KERRY: We're committed to going. The Russians are committed to going. Countries are committed to going.

QUESTION: John McCain says: The moderate opposition groups are losing. As a result, extremists are filling the void, and entire sections of Syria, stretching deep into Iraq, are now effectively safe havens for al-Qaida. True?

SECRETARY KERRY: There's some truth – yeah, it's absolutely true. Al-Qaida has greater clout there than it had before, and it's an increasing threat. And it's a threat we're going to have to confront.

But John also understands that the members of Congress, with whom he serves, were not willing to put additional money in in order to fund overtly and put money into the opposition significantly.

QUESTION: Let's turn to the war we are still in, and that is in Afghanistan. And there's very little progress it appears with Hamid Karzai, the president who does not want to sign this security agreement that would allow U.S. forces to remain beyond 2014, making it clear that's what the U.S. wants, to allow troops to stay beyond 2014.

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, the U.S. wants success in Afghanistan. And success means having an Afghan arms force that has the ability to sustain itself and provide security to the people of Afghanistan so they can continue on the road to developing their society, their institutions, their healthcare system, their education, and other things that are happening today. When America went

into Afghanistan, Martha, there were about 900,000 kids in school. They were all boys. Today there are about 7 or 8 million children in school, and almost 40 percent of them are girls. So there's a huge transformation taking place, and we want to try to hold onto that.

QUESTION: And this – if we don't leave those troops there, can you guarantee that young women can still go to school there?

SECRETARY KERRY: No. Absolutely not. You can't guarantee anything, I think. If American forces were not there, I think there would be serious challenges with respect to Afghanistan's security. But – here's the but – I believe that Hamid Karzai, either he or his successor will sign this. Now I think he needs to sign it.

QUESTION: His successor? So it's okay for a successor --

SECRETARY KERRY: I said they will. No, no, no. I said either he or they will, but he needs to sign it.

QUESTION: By when? Give me a date.

SECRETARY KERRY: We negotiated – let me just finish – we negotiated an agreement. That wasn't in place, by the way, a year ago. Now we have an agreement that's been negotiated, and he has said to me personally, as recently as a day ago, reiterated through his minister, that the language is fine. So we are very close to the ability to move forward. And I believe it will be signed and I hope it'll be signed as soon as possible.

QUESTION: Is there a cutoff date, where you have to say we can't do it, we can't leave troops there?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, there is a cutoff date, but I'm not going to get into cutoff dates. I think what's important to understand is --

QUESTION: First it was October, then it was going to have to be by January.

SECRETARY KERRY: No. This needs to be signed as soon as possible. And I think he understands that.

QUESTION: How long do you want troops to stay there?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, that's up to the President of the United States and it's up to the process on the ground. But the President has already said we are prepared to be there for a number of years going forward in a very different role, a very diminished role of training, advising, and equipping the Afghans. We will not be in combat. America will not be engaged in combat.

QUESTION: But counterterrorism troops, you want there as well.

SECRETARY KERRY: It's a very different. We will be doing counterterrorism. That is correct.

QUESTION: That's combat.

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, it is – not automatically, not directly. It can be intel gathering. It can be providing information to the Afghans that they act on. And in some cases, it might wind up being

kinetic by American forces. But the point is, it's not day-to-day combat against the Taliban on behalf of the Afghan people. It's counterterrorism to fight against terrorists – al-Qaida, and Haqqani Network, others – who are threatening American assets and America itself.

QUESTION: You've put so much effort in your first year into Mideast peace. You've got the parties talking, but has there been any real concrete progress on the really tough issues?

SECRETARY KERRY: Yes. Actually, there has been. But we've agreed not to be talking about what we're doing, because it just creates great expectations, it creates pressure, it creates opposition in some cases. If this conflict was easy, Martha, this would have been done years ago. It's confounded presidents and secretaries of state for 30 or 40 years. And it's complicated.

QUESTION: And you feel this time its different?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, I think we're in a different moment now. And hopefully the leaders will seize this moment and at least move the balls forward somewhat.

QUESTION: We're sitting in Ho Chi Minh City. You're a Vietnam War veteran and an anti-war activist after the Vietnam War. How much of your world view comes from your time spent here?

SECRETARY KERRY: Well, obviously, some of it Martha. But one thing I'm very careful – very, very careful – not to do is see everything through the lens of Vietnam. That would be a huge mistake. And it's informative, but it doesn't imprison me. It doesn't dominate me.

QUESTION: Thanks very much, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY KERRY: Thank you

6. U.S. Envoy at U.N. on Syria Chemical Weapons Report (12-13-2013)

U.S. Mission to the United Nations, New York, NY

Remarks by Rosemary A. DiCarlo, U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Briefing by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the Final Report by the UN Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria

The United States would like to express its appreciation to Dr. Sellstrom and his brave team, who faced significant risk in carrying out their mission in an active war zone. We commend them for their bravery and professionalism, including in preparing the final report released yesterday. This report authoritatively confirms what we already know – chemical weapons have been used in Syria to kill hundreds of people. Its contents are disturbing. In the August 21 attack in Eastern Ghouta alone, which the U.S. assesses with high confidence was carried out by the regime, over 1,400 people were killed, making it the worst chemical weapons attack the world has seen in more than 25 years. The United States strongly and unequivocally condemns any use of chemical weapons.

For this reason, the United States, working closely with the United Nations, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Russia and other partners, has made it our highest priority to ensure that Syria's deadly chemical weapons program is eliminated. The UN-OPCW Joint Mission in Syria has made rapid progress, despite the dangers faced each day working in conflict areas. We are well on our way to achieving our shared goal of eradicating Syria's chemical weapons program by the middle of next year. The United States continues to work with partners to prepare for the Geneva II peace conference and a lasting political solution to the conflict.

7. Air Force Envisions Smaller Force to Preserve Readiness (12-13-2013)

By Amaani Lyle
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13, 2013 – Discussing upcoming budgetary variables during a Pentagon news conference today, the Air Force's top civilian leader for the past six months addressed the inevitability of a smaller force.

Acting Air Force Secretary Eric Fanning, who is returning next week to his position as undersecretary of the Air Force following today's Senate confirmation of Deborah Lee James to assume the service's top civilian position, recounted traveling to more than 40 bases to meet with thousands of airmen during his six-month tenure.

"[Airmen] see better than any of us the impact that readiness is having, because they're not training, they're not flying, they're not able to maintain some things," Fanning said. "They worry about what their future is going to be in the Air Force."

Feedback from individual and group meetings with airmen, Fanning said, showed that uniformed and civilian Air Force members believe that budget issues are keeping them from being able to contribute to the mission the way they want to.

"Even during the furlough," he said, "some civilians certainly complained about the impact it had on their pocketbook, but far more than that, civilians are telling me, 'I can't do what I need to do and want to do for the Air Force in 32 hours a week.'"

But, Fanning said, the national debt burden is a long-term national security issue, and Air Force officials are committed to being a part of the solution as the defense budget takes shape.

"I believe the American people have a right as we come out of two long wars to feel they can spend less, invest less in national security forces," he said.

He cited examples of spending reductions following historical conflicts such as World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War.

"We've usually not started [reducing spending] until the conflict is over, ... and we're still at war, ... and we've always had some type of ramp to ease into those cuts," he said. However, he explained, sequestration spending cuts don't allow for such flexibility.

"It's not just the dollar cuts. ... It's the mechanics of sequestration, the immediacy of those cuts," Fanning said. "It's forcing us to make choices that we wouldn't make otherwise and it's forcing us to draw down in a more destructive way than necessary."

Disproportionate pressure also remains on investment and readiness, because resizing the force takes time even when it's possible, Fanning said. And congressional reticence to consider another round of base realignments and closures has proven costly and time-consuming in reducing the personnel force, creating an increasingly oversized infrastructure, he added.

With only operations and maintenance and investment accounts remaining for quick assessment, a profound impact to readiness could ensue.

“The Air Force was already in a 20-year readiness decline, something we were just starting to address when sequestration hit,” said Fanning, adding that the service’s size and structure doesn’t lend itself to a tiered readiness model.

“When the flag goes up,” he said, “the Air Force is expected to get to the crisis rapidly — speed is a key advantage of Air Force power.”

The number of Air Force squadrons equals the combatant commanders’ requirements, he said, but with little or no time to bring forces up to full readiness.

“If it takes months to generate combat air power, the president loses deterrence, diplomatic influence and contingency options on which the nation has come to depend,” he said.

Fanning characterized budget compromises currently in debate on Capitol Hill as encouraging though lower than service officials would like. The additional funds over the next two years will help cover readiness shortfalls, stability and planning, he said.

“Even with this relief, we will need to resize the Air Force to one that is smaller than it is today in order to protect investments we need for the future and to shape an Air Force that we can keep ready and we can’t do these cuts individually, ad hoc, in isolation,” Fanning said. “If something’s restored to the budget we present to the Hill, something else will need to go.”

Still, Fanning pledged a continued commitment to helping airmen get past the “distractions” of budget and political uncertainty.

“We will make the decisions that we can, as quickly as we can, as transparently as we can ... to get the Air Force back to that ‘new normal,’” he said.

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[8. State's Sherman on P5+1 Plan of Action with Iran \(12-12-2013\)](#)

Testimony by Wendy R. Sherman, Under Secretary for Political Affairs

Written Statement Before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs

Assessing the P5+1 Joint Plan of Action with Iran

Good morning, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Crapo, distinguished members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to discuss the details of the Joint Plan of Action (JPA) concluded with Iran and our P5+1 partners on November 24 in Geneva.

Let me begin by noting that the diplomatic opportunity before us is a direct result of the cooperation between Congress and the Administration to put in place and implement a comprehensive and unprecedented sanctions regime designed to press Iran to address international concerns with its nuclear program.

Our collaboration on sanctions is what brought Iran to the table. However, it is important to underscore that what we do from this point forward is just as critical, if not more so, in terms of testing Iran's intentions. In that regard, I look forward to our consultations over the important weeks and months ahead.

Today, I want to give you the facts about what was agreed to in Geneva, so you can judge the merits of the JPA for yourself.

Iran Commitments

We have long recognized that the Iranian nuclear program constitutes one of the most serious threats to U.S. national security and our interests in the Middle East. Thanks to the sanctions pressure, and a firm and united position from the P5+1 (China, France, Russia, UK, U.S. and Germany, in coordination with the EU), we have reached an understanding that constitutes the most significant effort to halt the advance of Iran's nuclear program in nearly a decade. As a consequence, the JPA agreed to in Geneva is profoundly in America's national security interest, and makes our regional partners safer and more secure.

The JPA is sequenced, with a 6-month period designed explicitly to block near-term Iranian pathways to a nuclear weapon, while creating space for a long-term comprehensive solution. The goal of that comprehensive solution is to resolve the international community's concerns with Iran's nuclear program. What this initial plan does is help ensure that Iran's nuclear program cannot advance while negotiations towards that solution proceed.

Upon implementation in the coming weeks, this initial step will immediately: halt progress of the Iranian nuclear program; roll it back in key respects; and introduce unprecedented monitoring into Iran's nuclear activities. Taken together, these measures will prevent Iran from enhancing its ability to create a nuclear weapon and increase the confidence in our ability to detect any move towards nuclear break-out or diversion of material towards a covert program.

The details demonstrate why this is the case. First, as stated, Iran must halt the progress of its enrichment program. This means, under the express terms of the JPA, that Iran cannot increase its enrichment capacity. Iran's stockpile of 3.5 percent enriched uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) cannot grow – it will be the same amount or less at the end of the six month period as it is at the beginning. Iran cannot build new enrichment facilities for the production of enriched uranium. Iran cannot install additional centrifuges of any type in their production facilities, operate more centrifuges, nor replace existing centrifuges with more advanced types. Moreover, Iran must limit centrifuge production to those needed to replace damaged machines; thus Iran cannot expand its stockpile of centrifuges.

Second, during this initial phase, Iran will roll back or neutralize key aspects of its program. Iran must cease all enrichment over five percent. The piping at Fordow and Natanz that is used to more efficiently enrich uranium over five percent must be dismantled. Iran must neutralize its entire 20 percent stockpile of enriched uranium hexafluoride by diluting it to a lower level of enriched uranium hexafluoride or converting it to oxide for fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor.

Finally, Iran cannot advance work on the plutonium track. At Arak, Iran cannot commission the heavy water reactor under construction nor transfer fuel or heavy water to the reactor site. Iran cannot test additional fuel or produce more fuel for the reactor nor install remaining components for the reactor. Iran cannot construct a facility for reprocessing spent fuel. Without reprocessing, Iran cannot separate plutonium from spent fuel and therefore cannot obtain any plutonium for use in a nuclear weapon. As such, this first step freezes the timeline for beginning operations at the Arak reactor and halts progress on any plutonium pathway to a weapon.

Significantly, the monitoring measures outlined in the JPA will provide much more timely warning of a breakout at Iran's declared enrichment facilities and add new checks against the diversion of equipment for any potential covert enrichment program. Some have rightfully asked why we should trust Iran to live up to these commitments. As Secretary Kerry has said, the JPA is not based on trust, it is based on verification – and the verification mechanisms set forth in the JPA are unprecedented.

Under its express terms, Iran must permit daily access by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors to the facilities at Natanz and Fordow and allow more frequent access to the Arak reactor. Iran must allow IAEA inspectors access to sites related to centrifuge assembly and production of centrifuge rotors (both key aspects of the program). Iran must allow IAEA inspectors access to uranium mines and mills. Iran must provide design information for the Arak heavy water reactor. These monitoring mechanisms will provide additional warning of breakout or diversion of equipment all along the nuclear fuel cycle and would not be in place without the understanding reached in Geneva.

In summary, even in its initial phase, the JPA stops any advances in each of the potential pathways to a weapon that has long concerned us and our closest allies. It eliminates Iran's stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium hexafluoride. It stops installation of additional centrifuges at production facilities, especially Iran's most advanced centrifuge design, together with freezing further accumulation of 3.5 percent enriched uranium hexafluoride. And it ensures that the Arak reactor cannot be brought on line while we negotiate a comprehensive solution.

P5+1 Commitments

In return for these concrete actions by Iran and as Iran takes the required steps, the P5+1 will provide limited, temporary, and reversible relief while maintaining the core architecture of our sanctions regime – including key oil and banking sanctions. And we will vigorously enforce these and all other existing sanctions.

We estimate that this limited relief will provide approximately \$6-7 billion in revenue.

First, we will hold steady Iran's exports of crude oil at levels that are down over 60 percent since 2011. This means that Iran will continue to lose \$4-5 billion per month while the JPA is in effect compared to 2011. Let me be clear, however. We will not allow Iran's exports to increase and we will continue collaboration with our international partners to ensure that they understand that any increases in Iranian oil purchases – or any new purchases of Iranian oil – remain subject to sanctions.

Second, we are prepared to allow Iran to access \$4.2 billion in its restricted assets, not in a lump sum, but in monthly allocations that keep up with verified Iranian progress on its nuclear commitments. Remember, Iran will continue to lose \$4-5 billion a month due to our oil sanctions

compared to 2011, so this access to funds is less than one month of those losses. And this is a fraction of Iran's total needs for imports or its budget shortfall.

Third, the P5+1 agreed to suspend certain sanctions on gold and precious metals, Iran's auto sector and on Iran's petrochemical exports. The suspension of the sanctions on gold and precious metals will not allow Iran to use restricted assets to purchase gold and precious metals, rather it allows Iranians to import and export gold and precious metals. The suspension of the sanctions on the auto industry will allow Iran to obtain support and services from third countries for the assembly and manufacturing of light and heavy vehicles. The suspension of sanctions on petrochemical exports means Iran will be able to sell petrochemicals and retain the revenues from these sales. We estimate that Iran will earn approximately \$1.5 billion in revenue from the temporary suspension of these sanctions.

We will also license the supply and installation of spare parts for the safety of flight for airplanes to occur in Iran. We will also license safety inspections and related services to occur in Iran. Notably, this will not apply to any airline subject to sanctions under our counter-terrorism authorities.

In addition, solely for the financing of humanitarian transactions and tuition assistance for Iranians studying abroad, we will facilitate access to Iran's overseas accounts for these specific transactions. Even before the JPA, we never intended to deprive the Iranian people of humanitarian goods, like food and medicine. In fact, Congress has explicitly exempted these transactions from sanctions.

There have been some that have incorrectly represented the limited relief as being far more. So, let me reiterate. The total relief envisioned in the JPA amounts to between \$6-7 billion – nowhere near the \$20 or \$40 billion that some have reported. The total relief for Iran envisioned in the JPA would be a modest fraction of the approximately \$100 billion in foreign exchange holdings that are inaccessible or restricted because of our ongoing sanctions pressure. This sanctions pressure, moreover, will continue to increase over the six months of this initial phase through the continued enforcement of our sanctions.

Continued Enforcement of Sanctions

It is important to understand that the overwhelming majority of our sanctions remain in place and we will continue to vigorously enforce those sanctions to ensure that Iran receives only the limited relief that we agreed to. This will include aggressive enforcement of sanctions under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010 (CISADA), the Iran Sanctions Act, the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012, and the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012. This means that sanctions will continue to apply to broad swaths of Iran's economy including its energy, financial, shipping, and shipbuilding sectors. By rigorous monitoring we will also prevent abuse of the relief that is part of the JPA. Were we to see increased purchases of oil or sanctions evasion, we are prepared to act swiftly to sanction the offenders.

Moreover, the U.S. trade embargo remains in place and U.N. Security Council's sanctions remain in place. All sanctions related to Iran's military program, state sponsorship of terrorism, and human rights abuses and censorship remain in place. Our vigilance will continue.

What is also important to understand is that we remain in control. If Iran fails to live up to its commitments as agreed to in Geneva, we would be prepared to work with Congress to ramp up sanctions. In that situation, we would be well-positioned to maximize the impact of any new

sanctions because we would likely have the support of the international community, which is essential for any increased pressure to work

In comparison, moving forward on new sanctions now would derail the promising and yet-to-be-tested first step outlined above, alienate us from our allies, and risk unraveling the international cohesion that has proven so essential to ensuring our sanctions have the intended effect.

The Way Ahead

In assessing this deal on the merits, we must compare where we would be without it.

Without the JPA, Iran's program would continue to advance: Iran could spin thousands of additional centrifuges; install and spin next-generation centrifuges that reduce its breakout times; advance on the plutonium track by fueling and commissioning the Arak heavy water reactor and install remaining components ; and grow its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium hexafluoride. It could do all of that, moreover, without the new inspections that are part of this deal and give us new tools to help detect breakout.

With the JPA, we halt the program in its tracks, roll it back in key respects, and put time on the clock to negotiate a long-term, comprehensive solution with strict limits and verifiable assurances that Iran's nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes.

In a perfect world, we could get to such a comprehensive solution right away. But the reality is that in the absence of the JPA, we would have had an Iranian nuclear program that could double its enrichment capacity, grow its stockpile of enriched uranium, and make progress on starting up the Arak reactor.

We are now moving forward to prepare for implementation. This week, our experts are in Vienna discussing with their P5+1 counterparts, Iran, and the IAEA, the mechanisms and timeframes for beginning implementation and setting a start date. These are technical and complex discussions, and it is critical that we do them well and right -- working to protect our national security interests at every step along the way.

At the same time, the JPA and its implementation is only a first step. There are still many issues related to Iran's nuclear program that must be addressed, and in the process, Iran must work with the IAEA to resolve all past and present issues of concern. That is why our ultimate aim is a comprehensive agreement that fully addresses all of our longstanding concerns.

Conclusion

Finally, let me be clear about one thing: Our policy with regard to Iran has not changed. The President has been clear that he will not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapon. While his strong preference is for a diplomatic solution, he is prepared to use all elements of American power to prevent that outcome.

Our commitment to working with our partners, in the region and elsewhere, to hold Iran accountable for all its actions also remains firm. These negotiations will solely focus on Iran's nuclear program. So we will continue to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in the region. We will continue to hold Iran accountable for its support for terrorism. Iran remains listed as a State Sponsor of Terror and our sanctions for their support of terror remain in place.

Our sanctions on Iran's human rights abusers will also continue and so will our support for the fundamental rights of all Iranians. Last week, National Security Advisor Rice reiterated our support for the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and called on Iran to allow him to visit Iran. We will continue to speak forcefully for the oppressed inside Iran, including through our support, later this month, for a resolution before the UN General Assembly condemning Iran's human rights practices

We call on Iran to release Saeed Abedini and Amir Hekmati and support our efforts to bring Robert Levinson home. As Secretary Kerry has said, one day is too long to be in captivity, and one day for any American citizen is more than any American wants to see somebody endure. Mr. Abedini, Mr. Hekmati, and Mr. Levinson have been gone too long and we will continue to do everything we can, using quiet diplomacy.

And we will prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. That is what these negotiations are all about. We have been encouraged that nearly 70 countries have expressed support for the understandings reached in Geneva, including statements of support from our partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council, with whom we remain closely engaged. The sentiment from our partners has been clear: give this process a chance. If Iran lives up to its commitments then the world will become a safer place. If it does not, then we retain all options to ensure that Iran can never obtain a nuclear weapon. The coming months will be a test of Iranian intentions, and of the possibility for a peaceful resolution to this crisis.

Throughout, and as always, we look forward to working closely with the Congress to ensure that U.S. national security interests are protected and advanced.

Thank you.

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[9. Agreement Is Afghanistan's Path to Lasting Peace, Official Says \(12-12-2013\)](#)

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — The Bilateral Security Agreement — which specifies conditions for continued U.S. security cooperation with Afghanistan after the current NATO mission ends in December 2014 — is Afghanistan's path to a lasting peace, says James Dobbins, the U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In remarks submitted December 10 for the record to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Dobbins said the security agreement, in addition to aiding security and development in Afghanistan, will “send an important signal to the people of Afghanistan, to the Taliban, to our allies and partners, and to the region.”

A signed agreement, Dobbins said, will tell the Taliban that “their only path to peace is by ending violence, breaking ties with al-Qaida and accepting the Afghan constitution, including its protections for women and minorities.”

The agreement "will assure the region that the United States will remain engaged there and not abandon Afghanistan," Dobbins said, and "will open the door for NATO to begin negotiations on the Status of Forces Agreement with Afghanistan that will cover its forces participating in the 'train, advise, and assist' mission."

After a year of negotiations to conclude the text, the security agreement was submitted in November to a Loya Jirga, a traditional gathering of 2,500 Afghan leaders from all parts of the country. After three days of debate, the Loya Jirga overwhelmingly endorsed the agreement as written and urged President Hamid Karzai to sign it before the end of the year.

"This decision underscores the clear and strong desire of the Afghan people to continue their partnership with the United States and the international community and their determination to move forward, away from the Taliban past," Dobbins said.

Karzai, however, has indicated he may not sign the security agreement before the upcoming Afghan presidential election, planned for April 2014, but "delaying signature is in no one's interest," Dobbins said.

"Delay would add another element of uncertainty as Afghans prepare for the April 2014 election to choose President Karzai's successor," Dobbins said. "For the United States and our NATO allies, delay means a lack of clarity needed to plan for a post-2014 military presence. That, in turn, would jeopardize fulfillment of the pledges of assistance that NATO and other countries made at the Chicago and Tokyo conferences in 2012."

Without Karzai's prompt signature, Dobbins said, the United States "will have no choice but to initiate planning for a post-2014 future in which there would be no U.S. or NATO troop presence in Afghanistan."

"It has always been the aim of U.S. policy to strengthen Afghan institutions so that the Afghan government and people can provide for their own security, grow their own economy, and manage their own internal and external affairs," Dobbins said. The United States, he added, is "not about to decide to abandon all we and the Afghan people have achieved over the past 12 years."

Based on the endorsement of the agreement by the Loya Jirga, there is no doubt, Dobbins said, that the Afghan people want American and NATO forces to stay and that Afghans recognize the agreement is "the keystone of a much wider international commitment, involving over 70 countries ready to provide economic and security assistance to Afghanistan beyond 2015."

According to Dobbins, recent polls show that 57 percent of all Afghans believe their country is moving in the right direction and 76 percent believe they are better off economically than they were under the Taliban.

"The overall picture is one of an aspiring nation that has witnessed and welcomed the progress that the international effort has helped bring about," Dobbins said. "These are the people whose representatives at the Loya Jirga overwhelmingly approved" the agreement

While acknowledging that Afghanistan still suffers from many serious problems, Dobbins said Afghanistan's youth — more than 65 percent of Afghans are under 25 — want democracy, access to free media, economic opportunities, transparency and education.

December 18, 2013

“A partnership with the United States,” Dobbins said, “will help [Afghan youth] consolidate the institutions that did not exist 12 years ago, but which have grown in their lifetimes and which will help ensure that these youth rebuff the recruitment of extremists and help to build a peaceful, democratic partner for the United States and our allies.”
